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RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 6038  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0138

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SUBJECT: ARREST OF HUMAN TRAFFICKER RENEWS CALLS TO PASS  
ANTI-TRAFFICKING LAW

REF: 1) 08 Maputo 190 2) 07 Maputo 1293 3) 07 Maputo 1060

11. (U) SUMMARY. On March 20, Mozambique Television (TVM) ran an extensive story on two teenaged Mozambican girls trafficked to South Africa and forced into prostitution. The case is particularly significant because it represents the first time that authorities have apprehended a suspected trafficker of Mozambican citizens. This is the third widely reported case involving trafficking in persons since November (see reftels 1, 2), and its timing coincides with the National Assembly's anticipated debate on the country's first anti-trafficking in persons law during the current legislative session (March-May). In recent months the embassy, in conjunction with civil society groups, has effectively lobbied the government on the need to pass a law, and the latest slew of cases has only strengthened the cause. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) TVM's report revealed that the two girls were recruited in January at a beach in Maputo City by a female known only as "Diana," and who authorities believe to be a Mozambican citizen. The girls were lured by promises to study and work in South Africa, and Diana facilitated their travel despite the fact that neither girl possessed a passport. Diana transported the girls to a brothel in a luxury condominium on the outskirts of Pretoria. The girls were abused physically and forced to have sex with older men, as many as ten times a day.

13. (U) After two months' living in such conditions, a Mozambican lawyer living in Pretoria rescued the girls. The lawyer overheard a conversation about teenaged Mozambican prostitutes and conducted a private investigation, whereby he uncovered part of a powerful, well-organized syndicate involving recruiters in Mozambique sending a steady flow of young girls to South Africa and forcing them to become prostitutes. According to the TVM report, Diana offered the lawyer R2 million (USD 250 thousand) to keep quiet about the case, but the lawyer took the case to the South African police, who subsequently arrested Diana. The two Mozambican girls are being held in a safe-house in South Africa.

14. (U) Within days of the TVM report, the Mozambican government sent investigators from the Attorney General's office and the Criminal Investigation Police to South Africa to assist South African police in the investigation and discuss a possible extradition. Diana likely will be tried in South Africa considering many of the crimes occurred there, but Mozambican authorities are interested in trying her for kidnapping and falsification of documents, among other crimes.

15. (SBU) On March 24, several heads of committees in the Mozambican National Assembly, including the influential Justice and Human Rights Committee, invited two prominent Mozambican NGOs working on trafficking issues to discuss the proposed anti-trafficking law.

One NGO representative told poloff that the recent trafficking cases have demonstrated to the legislators without a doubt that trafficking in persons is a serious problem in Mozambique. The representative also noted that the head of the Justice and Human Rights Committee stated his belief that the law would be approved during this legislative session (see reftel 3).

16. (SBU) COMMENT: This is likely Mozambique's most high-profile trafficking in persons case, and TVM's thorough investigative report is a first for a country where trafficking in persons was scarcely discussed a few years ago. It is also noteworthy that the National Assembly personally invited NGO representatives to discuss the law and concluded there is an urgent need to pass the law. These developments demonstrate that USG efforts are beginning to pay dividends. We have been an active player in raising awareness by leading a bimonthly forum for civil society, government, and the diplomatic corps to discuss trafficking issues. In addition, we helped move the law forward by providing technical assistance in drafting the law, lobbying the Minister of Justice to present the draft to the Council of Ministers, and, in conjunction with civil society, lobbying the head of the Justice and Human Rights Committee and the head of the National Assembly to schedule the law on the current legislative calendar. While there are no guarantees, these actions along with the widespread reporting of trafficking-related cases make it increasingly likely that the National Assembly will debate and pass the anti-trafficking law during the current legislative session, making Mozambique the first country in SADC to have a comprehensive anti-trafficking law. END COMMENT

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